1;Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

Now it appears that the god was very fond of jungle plums or *bers* (*Zizyphus jujuba*), which she made a habit of gathering for him, and she also gathered large leaves for his couch in the forest. The story goes that for some reason, (unknown at least to the Kols telling the story), Sheori was driven out of some unknown habitation and in her flight to the forest came upon a colony of *rishis*, *munis* and *devatas*. Each devotee had his own little hut and in front of each hut was burning the sacred fire kept alive by cow dung cakes, and beside each fire was the place of meditation. When she arrived she found the colony deserted, as the devotees had all gone for a walk, and to take their bath in a near-by sacred tank. Sheori noticed that the places where the devotees sat for meditation were not very clean, for ashes and other refuse lay scattered about. She was moved to clean all this up while they were still away and this she set out to do and accomplished it before the *ashram* members returned. She swept it all clean, straightened up things, and plastered the place of meditation with cow dung in the most approved way. She then seated herself at one side and awaited their return. When they arrived and saw the woman seated near the sacred fires and realized what she had done they were very angry for they considered that she had defiled the place by her presence. They addressed her harshly and gave her a good scolding which she received meekly and without a word. Hearing this, Bhagawan, or as some said, Rama who is frequently addressed as Bhagawan, was greatly angered and in punishment for their rude behaviour caused their sacred tank to become putrid and full of loathsome insects and worms. At first the devotees did not connect this with their treatment of Sheori, and they were greatly amazed. Then Bhagawan broke in on the astonished group and said : "Unless you take this woman to the tank and cause her to bathe therein, your tank will remain vile and unclean." They were very much surprised, but obeyed Bhagawan and taking Sheori to the tank allowed her to bathe therein. The moment her feet descended the *ghat*, and touched the waters, the tank was transformed and again became pure and wholesome, and all the vile insects vanished.

Later on, as she continued to serve Bhagawan, she gathered jungle plums, keeping the sweet ones for him and eating the others herself. Bhagawan was pleased with her devotion and one day asked her if she would like a boon. He offered her a *raj* or a *barti*—a kingdom or a family, and she chose the latter. Five sons were born to her and ever since the Kols believe that they have been outstanding for the size of their families. "Children are God's gift to us," they say. Yet there are many who find fault with this choice and say that

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

is put a charm to protect it from the demons. In this case pieces of iron were found scattered about : bolts, nuts and scraps from the railway

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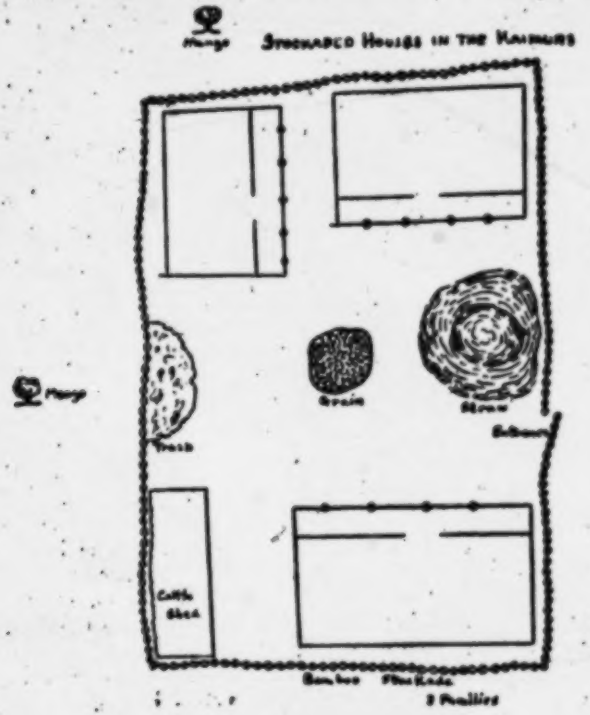

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Fig. 4.

line. There were also rather large pieces of stone scattered here and there under what would be the floor of the house. If obtainable, the best kind of stone to use is said to be the *sil* or grindstone for preparing condiments. At least one should be under the floor of every house, and should be under the section where the cooking is to be done. The *sil* is a symbol of fertility as well as a protector. Another protective device is old leather, and in this case an old shoe was utilized. In the picture such a shoe can be seen to the right, placed on the end of a stick stuck into the wall. As the wall is made higher, this too is

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1;Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

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cord the child will die if this is eaten; if it is buried deeply the child's teeth will appear late and if shallow they come early.[1]

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No traces of corresponding beliefs were found among the Kols, but they have the conviction, common to village India, that, should wrong persons get possession of the placenta and the umbilical cord they are likely to be used in magical practices dangerous to the mother and the infant. They should therefore be well-guarded and no outsider should have access to them; this is why they usually are not taken out of the house and are buried beneath the floor. A childless woman, by eating a portion of either the placenta or the umbilical [842] cord may dispel the influences which keep her barren, but in so doing there is every chance that it will result in injury and even death in the family from which she received by stealth the required parts.

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The work of the *dai* ordinarily lasts for six days, that is, during the full period of the uncleanness. Sometimes however, this is dispensed with as far as the full period is concerned, but during the time the *dai* is in the house it is her duty to care for the mother and child. [262 For the first three days the mother is not supposed to take anything 272] except a little milk but after that period is over she eats a bit of food after the first bath. If the child is a male the *dai* is usually paid one rupee for her work, and if the child be of the other sex, half that amount. During the period of her work the *dai* is given food from the household and when she leaves certain other presents and clothes are likely to be forthcoming. No difference in the period of uncleanness is made on account of sex—in either case it lasts for six days. In some places there is a relaxation of the strictness after the third day. A special [757] drink said to be made of "ginger root (*Cleoms vissosa*), raw sugar (*gur*) and certain jungle roots boiled together" is given to her three times a day until she is stronger.

846 789 824

During this period the mother is confined to her room. She should not touch anything and should spend the time lying down. Certain measures should now be taken to protect the mother and the young child from evil influences. These influences are particularly malignant during the first six days, but may be overcome by certain methods. A small fire should constantly burn in the lying-in room and should be kept alive by wood from the *bel* tree (*Aegle marmelos*). *Bel* is the wood of the gods and they are attracted by its smoke and no evil spirits dare be present at the same time. Sometimes twigs of *bel* wood are placed beside the infant or a twig of the same may be imbedded in the floor. The wood of the *nim* tree (*Melia azadirachta*)

1 *The Birhors*, p. 223.

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

roof is formed by bamboo branches covered with banana leaves. Around the upper edge of the *marhwa* is hung a frieze of mango twigs. Mango leaves are always found in connection with Kol weddings; they do not wither easily and are a symbol of everlastingness and stability. Strips of paper, usually coloured red, are used for decoration. The ground under the *marhwa* is carefully levelled and plastered with cowdung and in the very centre a hole twelve to eighteen inches deep is dug. This is where the central pole will be placed. Before the pole is lowered into position a *supari* nut (*Areca catechu*), some pieces of *haldi* (usually five) and two pice coins are placed in the pit, and according to some accounts, rice coloured with *haldi* is also thrown in. The *magrohan* is a piece of wood three to four feet in length and two to four inches in diameter. It should preferably be green wood, though a dry pole is used if a fresh one is not available. It is coloured red with *sendur* or yellow with *haldi* and has some thread, coloured either white or yellow, wrapped about it seven times from the top to the bottom. Along with the *magrohan* a short green bamboo stick is fixed together with a green *gular* branch and the iron bar used in digging the holes for the booth. If the central post should be of *gular* or other wood a bit of *saleh* must be inserted with it. The *saleh* is a symbol of fertility, being an evergreen tree which never withers and takes root easily and quickly; even an apparently dry stick will sprout. After the *magrohan* has been put in place it is reverently circuited by the builders seven times in a clockwise direction and then *sendur* and cowdung are applied. The sacred pole stands at the centre of the wedding observances and at that time is surrounded by the articles now to be mentioned. Their position is indicated in figure 21 on the next page.

1. The *magrohan*.
2. A *kalas* (earthenware pot) filled with water. In the water there are mango leaves which are allowed to protrude at the top and over the top is placed a *dip* or earthenware lamp.
3. A *sil* (grinding stone) on which are placed the following articles noted in the sub-heads:
   a. A *lorha* (stone roller)—which the bridegroom will use to roll over the pice and disturb their arrangement;
   b. Husked rice, which is sprinkled over the surface of the *sil*.
   c. Seven pice coins which are laid in a row on top of the rice.
   d. Seven bits of wood, each a different kind.
   e. A whole *supari* nut.
   f. *Haldi* water is sprinkled over the whole.
4. A branch of *gular* or *palasa* (*Butea frondosa*) buried near the *magrohan*. In a crotch of the same will be inserted a small earthen pot containing *haldi*, *supari* nut and two pice.

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562 There are at least two other things which a Kol woman must
563 never do: she may not plough, nor climb up on the roof of a house.
784 Such matters are looked upon as serious breaches of custom and deserve
241 a penalty from the *panch*. Repeated enquiries elicited no recent
481 violations of these taboos, and there was no definite statement as to what would be done in case they occurred. This latter taboo, however, probably has its exceptions, as we knew of a Kol woman helping to repair a roof on the mission house in Barela.

551 It is the rule that wives should never utter their husband's name
593 and the same is true of the husband who should never call his wife by her name. They are addressed, rather, as the mother or father of the children. For example if the child's name is Makkhi the husband will address his wife as Makkhi's mother. There is another general prohibition to the effect that a woman should never speak the name of a
[561] man older than herself; he should be addressed in some indirect way.

847 PARENTS AND CHILDREN. Kols say that children are Bhagawan's
858 gifts to them in answer to Sheori's prayer. Both sexes are welcome
842 in the home and there is no evidence that they favour one above the other. Abortion is all but unknown and it is considered an evil thing to attempt it. Apparently they know of no herb or plant growing in the jungle which would cause it.

868 When children are old enough they are assigned tasks about the house (there is no school besides this)—the girls learn cooking and other household duties, gather wood and cow dung, while the boys help herd goats or cattle, if any, or accompany their fathers to the fields where they play about and help to bring back its produce or the wood cut in the forest.

867 Almost no moral training, as such, is imparted, nor are the children severely punished when discipline is called for. A slap over the ear
[861] is usually all that is attempted and more often than not this is adroitly dodged. On the whole Kol parents are over indulgent with their children. The sum of moral training was said to be "Don't steal, don't lie, don't hurt anyone." When they were asked about the type of religious instruction given to children they said: "We neither know, nor can we tell." What children learn is largely by observation and practice rather than by direct instruction. Among the more literate people of Northern India moral teaching is given through the reading of such literature as the Ramayana of Tulsi Das. The Kols, though, do not have even this, unless it so happens that a mendicant reads to them, nevertheless it would not appear that their morals are any worse than those who have considerable more light to guide them.

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776 778 782 worship. No image is found, but there are exceptions. In Rewa State it was said that she should be worshipped at least twice a year: two days before the *Dasara* festival (September-October) and eight days after Chaita (March-April).

While animal sacrifices are forbidden at the Maihar temple, they may still be offered at the village shrine.[1] One group said that a black [184] kid was the only acceptable offering, while from others it was learned that chickens, lambs and suckling pigs may all be sacrificed. The usual [787] vegetable offerings are likewise acceptable. She frequently possesses people and speaks through them.

Childless women, especially, should worship her and make offerings [842] and sacrifices, so that she may speak to them through the *panda* and tell them what to do before they can expect children. Shardamai is therefore [755] reverenced at this place by childless women. It is also claimed that she can restore sight and cause the blind to walk and is a general miracle worker.

776 785 During *Chaita*, the Hindu month corresponding to parts of March and April of the Christian calendar, there should be an evening fast to Shardamai covering nine days. Regular food may be taken only in the [805] morning, and the evening meal should be limited to water, milk and water-nuts called *singhara* the Water-caltrop (*Trapa bispinosa* or *natans*). [262] On the ninth day the big offering to Shardamai must be made. Before anyone may partake of the meal on the ninth evening, a cocoanut[2] must [782] first be broken before the village shrine and offered to her, and then the edible part distributed to those present. Thereafter regular meals may be taken. If possible someone from the village, or better yet several from the chief families should go to Maihar to worship. Their worship at Shardamai's temple and the worship at home will reinforce the bond of friendship which they must maintain.

Shivari or Sheori. Shivari is called the mother of all Kols and served 776 Rama during his exile and search for Sita and has thus become deified. Shivari is nearly always listed by Kols, nevertheless actual worship [778] of her is rare; but Kols talk of her temple somewhere in Rewa and also at Sheori-Narayan near Raipur, eastern Central Provinces. Stories concerning her are found in connection with the study of the origin of the Kols and in the chapter on legends.[3] She probably represents a tribal goddess.

[753 782] *Sitalamai*. This name is a euphemistic title meaning the cool,

1 Kali worship is associated with animal sacrifice and Shardamai is probably equivalent to Durga in Hinduism.

2 Probably a relic of human sacrifice.

3 See pp. 8-10; also Chapter X.

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776 825 773 According to Kol legends tigers and Kols have been closely associated. This may refer to the jungle habitation of early Kols or it may have a totemistic aspect. Descent from the totem may be implied in the legend recorded on pages 41-42. But now the tiger and the Kol have separated and gone their own ways, this being symbolic of changes in the Kol way of living. The tiger is reverenced because he is feared. While Kols claim that they should never hunt the tiger nor assist in a beat, nevertheless this principle is often broken due to the temptation of money. This attitude may have a totemistic origin, but it also may be due to the fear that he will return evil for evil.

776 782 825 The tiger should be propitiated along with the household gods, but as a rule he is not included in them by people who live in areas where tigers are not to be expected. It is the Kol that lives in or near the jungle who fears the tiger. Baghdeo is offered a cocoanut, *chapatis* and other food. At the *Holi* season he should be given a chicken. The opinion is advanced that if this is overlooked Baghdeo may attack, kill, and eat male members of the family not sacrificing to him. It is claimed by these folks that he will never attack a woman or a girl. If he is pleased they may go into the mountains and jungle in search of wood and grass without fear of him. If he is met, he will pass them by, and should be respectfully spoken to. A Kol need not fear a tiger unless he has neglected his offerings to Baghdeo.

776 842 782 *Bahanar Singh Deo* is another of the Kol household gods and has the power to close the womb of the women folk and cause barrenness. In one centre it was said that women who desired children should come before him and sacrifice to him in preference to Shardamai. If Bahanar Singh should fail, then Shardamai may be tried. This *deo* is particularly fond of white offerings, and a white kid or chicken is preferred. This should be offered at the village shrine. At the time of offering the woman desiring children comes before the shrine with a pot of oil and *haldi*, into which she dips her right hand and somewhere about the shrine makes an impression of the whole of her hand. This attracts Bahanar Singh and helps him to identify the woman. The *panda* is there and cuts the animal, sprinkles the blood, and tells her what to do in order that her prayer may be granted. He may advise certain other offerings, and perhaps command that she abstain from certain foods, particularly rich ones, for a season.

776 782 824 *Barum baba*. Barum *baba* is quite often thought of as an evil spirit. In the Kaimur hills it is said that he always lives in *pipal* trees. No image or sign of his presence is made. The offerings are simply placed at the foot of the tree which he inhabits, and cocoanuts and *khichri* were mentioned as offerings. It was also asserted that he likes to have the sacred